

## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of the Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan is to provide a framework in which policy makers at the state, local and institutional levels can work together to support and build environments that make it easier for Washington State residents to choose healthy foods and to be physically active in order to:

- 1. Slow the increase in the proportion of adults and children who are obese**
- 2. Reduce rates of chronic disease**
- 3. Improve the quality of life**

The vision for the plan is that Washington State residents will enjoy good nutrition, have active lives, and live in healthy communities.

Washington State is on the verge of a health care crisis:

- Obesity rates over the last decade have doubled
- Over half of all Washington State residents are obese or overweight
- Rates of chronic disease and disabling conditions that are associated with poor diet and lack of exercise continue to escalate year after year
- Rocketing medical costs are crippling Washington State's ability to provide affordable health care coverage
- The population that is over age 65 is increasing faster than in many other states

Leaders in Washington State must take action to combat this impending crisis.

As the population ages and medical costs rise, it is increasingly important to create environments that support healthy aging. Physical activity and a health promoting diets reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, osteoporosis, obesity and stroke. These diseases account for more than 60% of medical care expenditures. Good diets and physical activity are part of the solution to this rapidly rising problem.

It is clear that most Washington State residents should just, “move more and eat less.” Unfortunately, despite the fact that most people understand this basic message, little progress has been made in promoting healthy choices in a substantial portion of the population. The underlying theme of this plan is the need to promote nutrition and physical activity simultaneously at several levels – for individuals, for families, within institutions and organizations, in communities and through public policy. The plan emphasizes the need to build a strong foundation at the institutional, community and policy level so that it will be easier to choose healthy lifestyles.

One of the primary responsibilities of public health is to minimize the effects of societal and economic constraints that lead to health disparities. Environment and policy interventions have the potential to reach all residents of the state.

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The plan is one outcome of a year of strategic planning by the Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory Group (NPAAG). This group includes officials from state agencies as well as representatives from organizations across the state. The group brings together expertise from the fields of education, transportation, planning, nutrition, physical activity, agriculture, parks and recreation, economic development, and health care. The goals and objectives of the plan will be achieved through on-going collaboration between agencies, organizations, and communities.

There are two overarching goals for the plan:

- 1. Increase the proportion of adults and children who have diets that reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.**
- 2. Increase the proportion of adults and children who meet the physical activity recommendations.**

To achieve the goal for **nutrition** there are three objectives:

1. Increase access to health promoting foods
2. Reduce hunger and food insecurity
3. Increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their infants and toddlers

To achieve the goal for **physical activity** there are also three objectives:

1. Increase the number of people who have access to free or low cost recreational opportunities for physical activity
2. Increase the number of physical activity opportunities available to children
3. Increase the number of active community environments

The advisory group established priority recommendations for each of the objectives using criteria developed by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and approved by NPAAG. The priority recommendations are:

- Increase the consumption of vegetables and fruits
- Ensure that worksites provide healthful foods and beverages
- Ensure that schools Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (K-12) provide healthful foods and beverages
- Provide adequate support for nutrition and food programs
- Improve access to nutrition programs
- Ensure that health care settings, childcare facilities, and worksite environments are breastfeeding friendly
- Provide adequate funding for state and local recreation sites and facilities
- Develop model policies to increase access to public facilities for physical activity
- Increase the number of worksites that have policies that enhance activity opportunities

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- Adopt school based curricula and policies that provide quality, daily physical education for all students
- Encourage policies that provide K-12 students with opportunities for physical activity outside of formal Physical Education (PE) classes
- Provide opportunities to replace sedentary behaviors such as watching television with physical activity
- Utilize urban planning approaches – zoning and land use – that promote physical activity
- Incorporate transportation policy and infrastructure changes to promote non-motorized transit
- Enhance safety and perceived safety to improve community walkability and bikeability

The activities proposed in the plan will take place within a context that includes working with partners, communication, cultural competence, and ongoing surveillance, assessment and evaluation. This plan will be presented to policy makers in communities and agencies across Washington State. DOH and its partners will evaluate progress toward each of the objectives and monitor the dissemination and impact of the plan itself. The partners that came together to develop this plan will continue to work together, share results and learn from each other.